

# How the Haughty Headwaiter Picks out A Gentleman

*There Are Three Grades, but the Third Grade Really Doesn't Count Except on Rainy Nights, When the Other Two Stay Home, and Even Then They Don't Count for Much, Decides the New and*

*Autocratic Monarch*

links transferred to dress cuffs. Black tie. Light overcoat with business hat slipped with attempt at secrecy into hands of check room boy. Calf shoes, highly polished to imitate patent leather. Companion didn't use lip stick or wears a last year's gown.

Other grades: None, unless it's raining so hard the other three grades have all stayed home. Then couples of which the man is in some attempt at evening dress and the lady in fairly fluffy gown may be admitted to the tables in the corner where the footwaiters stand to keep them hidden. When the first grade appears the Headwaiter, and khaki was mingled with business suits naturally. It was the same in England, and France. Everywhere the dinner jacket was promoted to formality and the rule that a woman deserved full dress was abrogated. As was said above, there are places in New York, as in other Eastern cities, where full dress at dinner seems to be a voluntary impulse. But they are of the elect, and few. They are places where the Headwaiter still is a Duke, or a Prince, or a Baron, perhaps, but not yet a King. The revival of the dress suit as a proper adjunct to a "night out" in New York is one of the marks of a new phase of night life, just reaching its splendor, born of prohibition. Dancing, losing somewhat of its social favor, still is the night life cocktail—replacing the liquid cocktail of memory.

But the gay restaurants, the "tea places" and the night clubs, need more than dancing. They need an exhilaration. The dress suit has supplied this. It is human nature to want to go where it is difficult to go—where every one else can't go. And

There was never such a King—nor autocrat so powerful. In his eye there is hidden the look that makes and unmakes gentlemen—the Headwaiter. He has his own ideas of what constitutes gentility and there is no way to change his ideas—except to conform.

KINGS have gone somewhat out of style lately, at least in countries where they claimed divine instead of parliamentary right. Yet there is certain evidence just now that one especial class of kings, rather dethroned during the war, are coming into their own again. One of them attracted considerable attention just recently by a spectacular resort to his authority.

A New York broker of comfortable wealth and social position, accustomed to reside when in town at the most fashionable of the city's hotels, was ushered out of a hotel dining room by one of the newly enthroned kings because he, the broker, and his wife had neglected to don their evening clothes as a necessary detail of their preparations for dining.

The chagrined broker sued for damages and that brought public attention to the new crop of kings.

In the dimly remembered far away days before the war the headwaiter in the fashionable New York restaurant was acknowledged to be something of an autocrat. That he was powerful there could be no doubt. But he ranked rather as a prince, or perhaps just a duke—or even a baron. The diner out, who brought to the restaurant the money with which to pay the dinner bill and tip the lesser waiters and thus contribute to the wages of the noble headwaiter, was the real king in those days.

The headwaiter—prince, duke, baron or whatever his scale of rank among the peers of the night realm—demanded certain respect from the kings who came and ate his food, and he never found it necessary to be too servile—but he remained anyhow just the headwaiter.

But those are gone with other happy days.

Lo! Exit the Hohenzollerns and the Romanoffs perhaps, but comes now the monarch who is a greater king than they were.

The Headwaiter has been anointed, crowned and throned.

And his duties are now not merely to supervise the footwaiters who run the diners' errands to the kitchen but to select the best gentlemen from among those lesser persons who clamor at his portals for permission to enter into his domain and partake of the evening's menu of edible things.

The uniform of every gentleman, according to the new king, is evening clothes—a dress suit and the appurtenances thereto and decorations thereof. Among the latter may be numbered a lady in evening clothes. Or rather evening clothes on a lady. There is a distinction there which also is a difference. For the etiquette of the Headwaiter's court is like that of the heathen Chinese—peculiar.

Except in those extremely rare places

where those who dine seem naturally to appear in evening clothes through force of an unaffected habit it seems as if the new king cares not so much for the quality within the evening regalia as the quality of the garments themselves. Which indicates that the henchmen of the new king are habit makers and not genealogists.

It is most interesting to watch the Headwaiter select his best ladies and gentlemen. The process may be observed most any evening at most any of the places where it's not so much the food as the crowd that counts. It's such places that are reigned over by the king.

There are plush ropes across the wide doorways, perhaps. At either end of the rope is a liveried page, who hopes some day to be a headwaiter himself, and hopes that day will arrive before he is drafted for the commonplace job of being President. Any sensible page would rather be king than President—it's so much less democratic.

Beyond the ropes there are many, many tables, each set with crystal glasses that catch the glints from the amber lights. In the kingdom of the headwaiters lights always are amber. They got the idea from the stage, which also is where so many diners obtained the impression that every dress suit must have a key chain.

Some of these tables beyond the ropes are unoccupied. There seems to be room for quite a few more diners. But outside the ropes the crowd of patiently waiting couples increases. The pages look them over but do not see them. Pages are not raised to see things before the king sees them.

At the top of the steps, if there are steps, stands the King—the august Headwaiter himself. Immaculate, haughty, cynical, amused—but keen. So keen that he fails utterly to observe or hear the couple that stands at his very toes—they have waited an hour and have stood aside countless times to allow other couples to pass within the ropes—stood aside in awe as the king unbent to greet these other couples as if they were of rank almost equal to his own. No real King could bestow royal favor with more grace.

"I say, what's the chances of getting in there now, Old Top?" proposes the masculine portion of the couple standing close to the King's toes, as he notices with what ease the Headwaiter's first assistant pilots



Mrs. Rau, the broker's wife, who was refused service because she had not put on one of her many evening gowns.



Mr. Herbert E. Rau, the broker, who has called attention to his predicament when, appearing for dinner as he appears in the photograph, he couldn't dine. He is suing in the courts for damages for himself and Mrs. Rau.

the fortunate couple to a table—a table frankly and obviously chosen from the vacant ones by the couple themselves. "Those people picked out their own table—shows they're not all 'reserved'."

The Headwaiter looks down from his eminence upon the couple thus addressing him. Such a look! It is a masterpiece of a look. Only a King whose ancestors would have refused to humiliate themselves by playing golf even with Solomon could accomplish such a look. The disdain of a Borgias at the pleadings of a rival about to be poisoned; the hauteur with which Cleopatra gazed upon the Prime Minister who dared suggest to her that perhaps Mark was too much of a luxury; the contempt with which the Inquisitors were wont to watch the writhings of the heretics—all these historic looks combined could not evolve the look of the Headwaiter down upon this audacious couple.

The King deigns not to even speak. The couple knows—and just then the Headwaiter brushes them aside brusquely to make room for another couple. These two he greets with the kindly smile and the pages drop the ropes and the Assistant Headwaiter bows and leads the way—and then the ropes are up again.

The Headwaiter now looks again at the insistent couple standing close to his toes—the couple that has waited there for an hour. He doesn't speak—nor does he have to. His eyes say as plain as can be—

"See, he was a gentleman and she was a lady. That's why they got in. Run home and change your clothes and then

maybe you'll be a lady and a gentleman too and we'll unreserve a table for you."

It's really very simple, the way the Headwaiter does it.

First, there is the cardinal rule of his kingdom. The gentleman dines only, after 7 o'clock in such places, in full evening clothes. And as he always has a feminine companion at these places, she too will be in evening dress.

But there are many grades of gentlemen. First, second, third and so on. The King grades them by their dress suits.

First grade, class A: Secret sign from the check room boy that the gentleman has checked a top hat of the current season. White gloves, kid, not undertakers' cotton, or Broadway silk. Wing collar with white cravat. One pearl in shirt front. Pearl links. Companion with at least a satisfactory supply of jewels, diamonds preferable, since they shine more. Decollete. The King doesn't know the details of what will complete the first gradeness of the gown, but does require that it look "swell."

Then, there is second grade which, if there are several tables vacant and first graders are not so numerous, may succeed in getting under—or by, that is—the ropes. Two pearls in the shirt front instead of one means second grade. Three means tenth grade and impossible. Regular hat, if dark, permits the gentleman to remain within second grade. Silk or cotton gloves. Too narrow or too broad a braid on the trousers. No braid, no grade at all and no dinner.

Third grade: Black or haberdashery store studs in shirt front. Business shirt

at his position where he can look over the heads of the other grades waiting patiently for admittance to the dining room, seems to see them at once. First graders, secure in the assurance of their immaculateness and the imposing correctness of their feminine companions, have only to give the King a nod and the white gloved hands of the headwaiting royalty motion to the pages, the ropes drop, the other graders stand aside in awe and the favored pair, thus set apart as a true lady and gentleman, pass haughtily within the roped off portals and choose the vacant table that appeals most to their desires.

When he seats them the assistant King removes the little card "Reserved" from its nickel-silver stand.

Of course some of the second graders and even on off nights the third graders must be admitted. The King must see to it that every table has been occupied at least once before the chef goes home. So, now and then, the white gloved hands motion to a second grader or a third grader and the ropes drop again. The second graders are ushered to tables far away from the dance floor or the orchestra—if there is no dance floor there is an orchestra anyway—along the wall. Third graders—well, it's unpleasant even to think of the tables they get.

All of which marks the renaissance of the dress suit. It was granted dispensations during the war. Fifth avenue did not require them in the days when there were more important things than dressing for dinner in public places. In the homes, of course, the evening garb was prevalent as a matter of course—and habit. But the places where it was reveling, or to be seen or seen, that was the attraction rather than the necessities of food, let down the bars

it is human nature, too, to go more freely into the pockets of a dress suit on spend-thrift impulse than into the pockets of the business suit. It seems to be a problem of psychology.

The Headwaiter wants money spent at each of his tables, and he knows that the harder it is to reach these tables the more clamor there will be for them. And he knows the diner in a dress suit will order more liberally and tip more liberally—and remain longer if for no other reason than to get the worth out of the evening clothes.

CIRCUS society has its smart set, its social climbers, its clubmen, its submerged tenth, just like any other human group, according to Publicity Director Norwood of the Ringling Brothers-Barnum and Bailey Company.

"There is a caste system quite highly developed," he said. "The Fifth Avenue set of the circus is the equestrian group; Riverside Drive, the aerials; the West Seventies, the gymnasts and acrobats, and Twenty-third street, the clowns. The side show freaks are, of course, in a class by themselves and do not fraternize with the rest. They have their separate car while the show is on the road and during the winter live in hotels for freaks."

Notwithstanding the fact that there are castes, however, there is a great deal of the pan-circus spirit in the company. An equestrian is always ready to aid an acrobat with his act, a first class aerial may be seen helping with the apparatus of a gymnast.

"The social life of the circus citizen isn't as meager as outsiders suppose," stated Mr. Norwood. There are a large number of clubs—a tennis club, which holds an annual tournament; sewing circles for the women, and the clowns' "Puff Club" (the title celebrating that essential property of clowns as well as women, the powder puff).